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ABSTRACT

This guide is designed to help educators make good decisions about comprehensive school reform (CSR). Since CSR takes different forms in different schools, the booklet should help schools craft a unique plan that builds on unique strengths. It emphasizes the importance of choosing carefully one or more research-based CSR models to serve as the centerpiece for reform and then developing a common vision of change. Some 17 models are offered, and, although they might not meet every need of a school's CSR approach, they can provide essential guidance. Since choosing a model is essential to the process, the text lists nine criteria to consider when selecting a plan, which is followed by four basic steps for decision-making: (1) laying the groundwork; (2) evaluating the current situation; (3) profiling an ideal approach; and (4) deciding on a model. These protocols should help educators assess student learning and accomplishments, create a profile of an ideal CSR approach, and conduct research on a variety of CSR models. The bulk of the guide is contained in eight appendices that feature a self-evaluation tool, a summary of a self-evaluation, a profiling tool, a student-population chart, a sample research grid, and a list of resources. (RJM)

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Comprehensive School Reform

MAKING GOOD CHOICES

A Guide for Schools and Districts

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Making Good Choices Companion Videotape

This 12-minute videotape helps schools and districts understand the importance of the decision-making process to achieve successful and sustained comprehensive school reform. NCREL's *Making Good Choices* four-step approach is highlighted in the discussion. Contact NCREL's Comprehensive School Reform Help Desk at 800-356-2735, ext. 1062, to receive a **FREE** copy.

Comprehensive School Reform: Redesigning and revitalizing entire schools, focusing on enhanced teaching and learning.

Introduction

Schools across the United States are taking a new approach to school improvement called "comprehensive school reform" (CSR). Rather than implementing isolated programs, these schools seek to revitalize themselves to meet students' needs. Schools have been implementing CSR for years as Title I "schoolwide programs" or Goals 2000 school-improvement initiatives. With funding from a new grant program—the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Program—even more public schools are likely to pursue comprehensive school reform in the future.

CSR takes different forms in different schools. Each school develops and implements an approach—a detailed plan for transforming the way the school works. The ideal approach for a school addresses its unique needs, builds on its strengths, and helps the school overcome its challenges.

Making good choices means planning, selecting, and implementing a comprehensive approach to school reform that works for your school.

This guide will help your school develop an approach that works. In schools that tried CSR and failed, school leaders frequently made hasty and uninformed decisions about what approach to follow, or pursued an approach pressed upon them from outside. These schools did not go through a deliberate process of examining their needs and creating a CSR approach that met those needs.

This guide's purpose is to help you make good decisions about comprehensive school reform. One important decision, addressed in detail by this guide, is the choice of one or more research-based comprehensive school reform "models" to serve as the centerpiece of your approach. But successful comprehensive school reform is about much more than choosing a model. It is about developing a common vision of change with the power to sustain the school community through the hard work of school reform.

Overview

What is the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Program?

Sponsored by Congressmen Obey (WI) and Porter (IL), the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSRD) Program assists public schools in implementing effective, comprehensive school designs. The FY98 appropriation for this program makes $145 million available to state education agencies to provide competitive incentive grants to school districts for schools that elect to pursue comprehensive reform. Up to 3,000 schools may be eligible in year one for grants of no less than $50,000 (renewable for two years). The FY99 budget appropriates an additional $25 million for start-up schools and to help the models build their service capacity, evaluation data, and research base.

Your school's CSR approach should be based on its needs; however, the legislation strongly encourages that your approach include the adoption of a comprehensive school reform model—one of the preexisting, research-based school designs that are already in use in many schools and have proven their value. While these models might not provide every aspect of your school's comprehensive reform approach, one of them can serve as the centerpiece of your reform effort—a focal point to help organize all of the steps and processes required by your approach to improvement. The legislation names 17 comprehensive models (see box below), but you are free to choose other models, develop your own, or combine multiple models within a comprehensive approach.

Accelerated Schools
America's Choice
ATLAS Communities
Audrey Cohen College
Coalition of Essential Schools
Community for Learning
Co-NECT
Direct Instruction
Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound
High Schools That Work
Modern Red Schoolhouse
Paideia
Roots & Wings
School Development Program
Success for All
Talent Development High School
Urban Learning Centers

More information is available in the *Catalog of School Reform Models* (NWREL—see Appendix G)

To be eligible for CSRD Program funds, your school must implement a comprehensive approach that meets nine criteria outlined in the authorizing legislation.

The bottom line, however, is that eligibility for CSRD Program funds requires that your school choose an approach that meets nine criteria. Meeting these criteria means having a clear idea of where you are going, a well-thought out plan for getting there, and a means of measuring your progress. Organized under those headings, the nine criteria are*:

Where we are going?

1. *Comprehensive design with aligned components*: The components of the CSR approach all support a clear vision of school improvement. Every aspect of school functioning—from curriculum, instruction, and assessment to governance and management to parent and community involvement—is designed to move the school toward its chosen destination. All of these components fit together into a school-wide reform plan designed to enable all students to meet challenging content and performance.

2. *Support within the school*: The school's faculty, staff, and other critical stakeholders support the approach and are committed to its implementation.

* In the CSRD legislation and on most state's application forms, the nine criteria appear in a different order but are otherwise identical to those listed here. For the precise language describing these criteria, see the CSRD Program Web site, referenced in Appendix G. Also, be sure to look closely at your state's application materials to see how the state has put these criteria into practice in its competitive grant process.

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3. *Measurable goals and benchmarks*: A comprehensive school reform approach has measurable goals for student performance and benchmarks for meeting those goals.

How do we get there?

4. *Effective, research-based methods and strategies*: A comprehensive school reform approach employs innovative strategies and proven methods for student learning, teaching, and school management that are based on reliable research and effective practices, and have been replicated successfully in schools with diverse characteristics. In this guide, we further sub-divide this criterion into five categories:

- Curriculum
- Instruction
- Assessment
- Governance
- Management

5. *Professional development*: The approach provides high-quality and continuous teacher and staff professional development and training.

Nine Criteria for Choosing Models

1. Comprehensive design with aligned components
2. Support within the school
3. Measurable goals and benchmarks
4. Effective, research-based methods and strategies
5. Professional development
6. External technical support and assistance
7. Parental and community involvement
8. Coordination of resources
9. Evaluation strategies

6. *External technical support and assistance*: A comprehensive reform approach uses high-quality external support and assistance from an organization with experience or expertise in schoolwide reform and improvement.

7. *Parental and community involvement*: The approach provides for the meaningful involvement of parents and the local community in the improvement of the school.

8. *Coordination of resources*: The approach identifies how other resources (federal, state, local, and private) available to the school will be aligned and used to support the school reform effort.

How do we know it's working?

9. *Evaluation strategies*: The approach includes a plan for evaluating its impact on student learning.

How will this guide help your school pursue comprehensive reform?

This guide sets out a process that your school can use to develop a comprehensive reform approach. Since the CSRD Program legislation strongly encourages the use of preexisting school reform models, the guide ultimately focuses on choosing a model that meets the nine criteria and makes sense for your school. You have a wide array of designs from which to choose—more than two dozen nationally known designs, programs developed at a nearby university, and others that are based on solid research. Having all of these choices offers an exciting opportunity, but it also presents challenges. Looking at all the choices you face, your school needs to select a design that fits—one that addresses the needs of your students, aligns with your school community's "vision" for the school, builds on your assets, and helps address your challenges.

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Four Basic Steps for Decision Making

1. Laying the groundwork
2. Evaluating your current situation
3. Profiling an ideal approach
4. Deciding on a model

This guide outlines four basic steps in a decision-making process about comprehensive school reform:

1. *Laying the groundwork*. You decide who will be involved in the process, what kind of outside help you need, and what sort of timeline to set.

2. *Evaluating your current situation*. Your school takes a look at where you stand in three categories: your students' learning and accomplishments, your current school program, and the support for school improvement in your external environment.

3. *Profiling*. You create a profile of an ideal comprehensive school reform approach for your school.

4. *Deciding*. Based on your profile, you conduct research on a variety of comprehensive school reform models and make a decision about what to pursue.

The outcome of the process is a decision, but the process itself is important. Research on comprehensive school reform makes it clear that for wide-ranging change to succeed, there must be commitment from the school—not just from the principal, but teachers, other staff, parents, community members, the school district, and perhaps others. The process outlined here will not only help you reach a decision, it will help you reach one that garners the commitment of your entire school community.

Although this guide talks about CSRD Program grants, it does not provide help in preparing an application for CSRD Program funds. Because state and local procedures vary, it is important for you to investigate exactly what is required in your situation. The work you do using this guide, however, should provide you with much of the information you will need to prepare your application.

The tools in this guide are beneficial to schools whether or not they receive funding under that program. At its core, this guide is about devising ways to improve your school, not about applying for a grant. Even if you are ineligible for CSRD Program funds or are not awarded a grant, the guide will help your school make great strides toward comprehensive improvement.

Each state has its own application that schools and districts must complete to solicit funding. Questions about applying for CSRD Program funds should be directed to your state's education agency.

Step One: Laying the Groundwork

Who should be involved in making decisions about comprehensive reform?

Involving a wide range of stakeholders in the decision-making process is important for many reasons. Casting a wide net ensures that decisions respond to the real needs of the diverse population that attends your school. And broad involvement helps foster ownership—a commitment to the reform you select on the part of the entire school community.

At the same time, most schools elect to establish a subcommittee or small group to act on behalf of the larger task force in the process. Organizing a small group (perhaps a dozen or fewer people) makes it easier to move the process forward in an efficient fashion. Such a group can have meaningful discussions, divide up responsibilities, and hold its members accountable for carrying out their assigned tasks.

Inform and involve a wide range of stakeholders to make sure your plan addresses diverse needs and is supported by the entire school community.

Your school probably already has such a group in place—an existing school improvement team or a site council. Comprehensive school reform will work best if it builds upon your ongoing school improvement efforts. So put your existing school improvement team to work on this process to avoid duplicating effort and to ensure that other activities at the school dovetail with comprehensive reform. If you decide to create a new task force from scratch, be sure to think carefully about how the new team will communicate and collaborate with preexisting entities at the school. You have probably done quite a bit of work on school improvement in the past—make sure you capitalize on these efforts as you move forward.

To ensure that the task force represents the school community, you can take two important steps:

- Make sure representatives of critical stakeholder groups are part of the task force. There is no set list of whom you should involve, but the box on page 9 provides some useful suggestions, based in part on a national study of model school planning processes.
- Build communication with people outside the task force into the entire process. Announce the effort to your school community and invite input and participation. Depending on how much time you have, invite people outside the task force to complete some of the tools outlined in this guide, such as the needs assessment. Later in the guide, we also present some suggestions about submitting the task force's decisions to a wider audience for review.

In general, task forces like these submit recommendations to others for decisions rather than making decisions themselves. In this guide, when we refer to the task force "making a decision," we are talking about deciding what recommendation to pass on.

It is critical to the success of your effort that you work with your district to ensure that the school's vision, budget, assessment procedures, and professional development practices are aligned with the district's.

In the context of the CSRD Program it is important to think through how the district will be involved in your planning process. First, all applications for CSRD Program funding must go through your local school district. Second, support from your district in the comprehensive reform process can be critical to its success. Comprehensive reform is much more likely to work if your district provides you with at least

some of the human and financial resources you need and gives you the flexibility to carry out your plan.

Finally, consider whether it makes sense to bring in an outside facilitator to help with the process. Whether or not your school should look for outside facilitation depends in part on your past experience with planning and decision making efforts in your school. Have members of your school community developed the kinds of skills needed to shepherd a complicated process like the one outlined in these pages? Do members of the school community trust one another sufficiently to allow insiders to act as facilitators? If the answers to these two questions are no, outside facilitation should be a priority for you. These "no" answers may also indicate some deeper issues that you will need to address as you pursue comprehensive reform (as discussed under Step Two).

Building a Representative Team

A representative planning team includes people such as:

- School and district administrators
- Teachers representing various grades, content areas, and teams
- Other professional staff
- Parents
- Community representatives
- Business people
- Higher-education representatives
- Students

Adapted from *Implementing Schoolwide Programs, Volume I: An Idea Book on Planning*, Policy Studies Associates, 1998.

How much time should be spent developing a plan?

The process outlined in these pages has no specific timeline. In designing this process, we had two scenarios in mind—a short one and a long one. In the short scenario, your school has already spent some time getting ready for change and now spends just a few months working through the issues covered in the guide. You work quickly, perhaps, in order to meet your district's deadline for an application under the CSRD grant program or because your school has already been involved for some months in the planning phase for CSR. Using the short scenario does not mean that your school works out every detail of your comprehensive school reform approach in just a few months. Comprehensive reform entails a process of continuous improvement that starts well before and extends far beyond the submission of any grant application.

Getting to the point where you can begin to implement a CSR approach is time-consuming and work-intensive. Shortchanging this process will shortchange successful implementation.

In the long scenario, your school engages in a full-blown planning process that may last a year or more. The long scenario includes a comprehensive needs assessment, a detailed visioning process, and extensive research into reform options. Do not think of the longer scenario as just a delay in doing the work of school reform. On the contrary, the longer scenario involves concentrated activity building toward implementation of comprehensive

school reform. During this planning period, take the time to build the capacity of your team to work together, to foster commitment to the idea of change within your school, to enhance trust among school stakeholders, and generally to create the conditions in which comprehensive reform can succeed. CSRD Program funds can only be used for the implementation of comprehensive reform, so if you choose the long scenario you may need to delay the submission of a CSRD Program application.

If you opt for the short scenario, you can use the tools provided with this guide as a checklist for readiness. If you choose the long scenario, you may want to ask yourself at each stage whether you want to do more. For example, you may want to undertake a more complex needs assessment than the one we outline here. You will find many resources to help you with "going deeper," some of which are listed in Appendix G of this guide.

Whichever scenario you pursue, a critical early step is to establish a timeline for the process. After you review the contents of this guide, map out the steps along the way and how much time you would like to devote to each. Map backwards from the time your CSRD Program application is due through all of the steps leading up to submitting a high-quality application.

Steps to Include in a Timeline

- Laying the Groundwork
- Evaluating Your Current Situation
- Profiling
- Research and Decision Making
- Preparing Your Application
- Application Due Date

Step Two: Evaluating Your Current Situation

Before determining what types of comprehensive school reform models your school is interested in, you should first critically examine your current situation and pinpoint your highest priorities for improvement. The NCREL-developed Self-Evaluation Tool is designed to help your school create a snapshot of where you are related to such critical factors as governance and management, curriculum and instruction, professional development, and community involvement. The tool is split into four parts, found in Appendices A and B. In Appendix A, "Part I: Our Students" asks questions about the extent to which your students are meeting the standards set for them. "Part II: The Current State of Our School's Program" uses the CSRD Program's nine criteria to assess the current state of your school's program. "Part III: Our Environment" looks at resources and constraints that lie outside your walls.

To determine where you want to focus your reform effort, you must first carefully examine your current situation and pinpoint your highest priorities for improvement.

Overall Instructions

NCREL's self-evaluation process is just one possible tool you could use for this purpose. You may already have completed a needs assessment. Or perhaps you are required by your district or state to use a particular tool. Regardless of the evaluation tool you choose,

we recommend that you complete "Part IV: Summary" found in Appendix B.

Who should complete the tool? Schools can approach this issue in different ways. One approach is to have your team discuss each question and arrive at a common judgment. Another is to have individuals fill out the tool and then tabulate and discuss the results. Either way, it is important to have a mechanism for differences of opinion to be openly expressed and considered.

For each question in Parts I and II, the tool asks you to rate your school on a scale of one to four. Because of the nature of the questions, providing details and evidence to support your judgment is critical to your response.

For example, one questions is: To what extent is the proportion [of students] meeting your school's standards consistent across subjects, grade levels, and student groups? Suppose you give your school a "low" rating (1) on this question. The Details and Evidence section provides a place to be more specific about why you assigned a low rating. Your qualifying statements might note, for example, that student performance is especially low in reading, while achievement in other subjects looks a lot better. Or that student groups are performing at similar levels, with the exception of those for whom English is not their first language. You might also make note of any evidence you have to support your conclusions —test score data, for instance, that show gaps between your reading scores and those in other subjects. The critical issue here is to use data and evidence to support your ratings.

There are also spaces throughout the self-evaluation where you can include more specific questions that your school thinks are important. For example, suppose your school

Data-driven decision making is critical to making good choices. Evidence of success and need should be substantiated with data that reflect information for ALL students.

recently embarked on an effort to introduce alternative forms of assessment, such as using portfolios of student work to gauge progress over time. You might add a series of questions to ask how well this specific initiative was shaping up, such as:

- To what extent are teachers in our school using portfolios to assess students' progress?
- To what extent does the use of portfolios vary by teacher, grade level, or subject?
- How well prepared are our teachers to guide students in their preparation of portfolios?
- How well are teachers using the information they gain through portfolios to adjust their instruction for individual children?

However you decide to approach using this tool, it is critical that you spend quality time responding to the questions and providing supporting evidence.

Self-Evaluation Tool
Part I: Our Students

Part I of Appendix A contains a short list of questions designed to give you a quick picture of how well your students are doing at your school. The questions relate both to the overall performance of your students and to the performance of specific subgroups.

Self-Evaluation Tool
Part II: Our School Program

Part II is the heart of the self-evaluation, containing a host of questions designed to help you assess the current state of your school's overall program. The questions are organized along the lines of CSRD Program's nine criteria, so evaluating your school using this instrument should help you pinpoint areas to focus on in order to pursue comprehensive reform.

As a reminder, the nine criteria are:

Where are we going?

1. Comprehensive design with aligned components
2. Support within the school
3. Measurable goals and benchmarks

How do we get there?

4. Effective, research-based methods and strategies for:
   - Curriculum
   - Instruction
   - Assessment
   - Governance
   - Management
5. Professional development
6. External technical support and assistance
7. Parental and community involvement
8. Coordination of resources

How do we know it's working?

10. Evaluation strategies

Questions to Ask About Your School

- Is there a shared vision for your school?
- Are there measurable goals for student performance?
- How is your community involved in the learning process?
- What is your level of teacher quality?

Self-Evaluation Tool
Part III: Our Environment

In addition to the internal issues explored in Part II, your school's success in pursuing comprehensive reform will depend on the resources available to you—and the constraints imposed upon you—from outside. Part III asks you to answer a series of questions designed to assess your environment. This assessment has four subparts, examining:

1. Existing reform efforts under way in your district and state.
2. Policy and regulatory issues.
3. Financial resources available to you from outside.
4. Human resources available to you from outside.

Part IV: Summary of Self-Evaluation

This part of the Self-Evaluation (Appendix B) provides you with the opportunity to pull together what you have learned by completing the Self-Evaluation Tool. The goal is to help you identify the assets your school brings with it as well as the challenges you face. Both assets and challenges can be internal (characteristics of your school) or external (characteristics of the environment in which your school works).

The Summary poses four questions: (1) What are our school's major strengths? (2) What areas of our school need improvement? (3) Of these needs for improvement, what are the highest priorities? and (4) What barriers (both

What You Should Learn About Your School

1. What are its major strengths?
2. What areas need improvement?
3. Which of these areas needing improvement have the highest priority?
4. What barriers do you expect to face as you move forward on comprehensive reform?

internal and external) do we expect to face as we move forward on comprehensive reform?

To answer the first question, you may note that your students do particularly well in math, that your school's curriculum is quite well put-together, that teachers are heavily engaged in decision making, and that many parents are highly involved in the school's workings.

In answer to the second and third questions, you might indicate that in reading, your students lag behind their performance in other subjects and that limited English proficient students are not doing as well as others.

On the fourth question, you might note that your faculty has little experience observing one another and offering feedback, activities that might be critical to implementing comprehensive reform.

It is important at this stage to begin paring what could be a large set of priority needs into something more manageable. As educators, we are inclined to want to attack all of our problems at once, but we know this is not the most productive way to proceed. Begin prioritizing here, identifying your most important strengths and challenges.

Moving Forward Based on the Self-Evaluation

Once you have completed the Summary of your Self-Evaluation, you should have a valuable tool in your hands—a concise analysis of your school's main assets and challenges. The next step, if you decide to take it, is to begin devising (or revising) a plan for comprehensive school reform. Devising that plan is the subject of the next section, Step Three: Profiling.

Some issues to consider before you begin the profiling process.

Implementing comprehensive school reform is not the right starting place for every school. Here are three of the common reasons why schools decide to devote more time to planning or getting ready for the implementation phase:

1. A *school may decide that its needs for change at this time are not comprehensive in nature.* A school's self-evaluation may reveal that overall the school's improvement efforts are on track—with some isolated exceptions. Perhaps the school seems weak in a particular subject area. Or a small fraction of the school's faculty is not "on board" with the school's new direction. Or the school has not integrated technology sufficiently into an otherwise promising approach. If a school can pinpoint problems like these, more targeted strategies may be more appropriate than beginning an entirely new comprehensive reform approach.

If you decide a targeted strategy is more appropriate for your school because your overall improvement efforts are on track, some of the resources developed to support the CSRD Program can help you. For example, the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory's *Catalog of School Reform Models* contains information about 18 "content and skill-based" models concentrating on particular subjects such as reading or math.

You May Need More Time if...

1. The school's needs for improvement are not comprehensive in nature
2. School stakeholders lack the commitment, capabilities, or collegial working relationships needed to make comprehensive reform a success
3. The school does not have the support it will need from the district to implement comprehensive school reform

2. *School stakeholders may lack the commitment, capabilities, or collegial working relationships needed to make comprehensive reform a success.* Comprehensive school reform is a long-term process that requires all members of the school community to go above and beyond their "normal" responsibilities. First and foremost, eliciting this kind of effort requires a substantial commitment by all parts of the school community to the proposed changes. In addition, depending upon the type of reform pursued, school stakeholders will need certain capabilities in order to carry out the reform. And since the reform envisioned is comprehensive, it requires members of the school community to work together over an extended period of time. That kind of cooperation requires a level of collegiality that many schools may not think they can muster without putting some targeted time and resources into first building this collegiality among staff and community. Many of the questions in Parts II and III of your self-evaluation address these issues.

Most schools will find themselves strong in some areas, weak in others. But what should you make of your weaknesses? If your school lacks some of the capabilities implied by the assessment, does this mean that comprehensive reform is not for you? Not necessarily. Suppose, for example, that your assessment suggests that teachers in your school lack experience working together on school improvement efforts, or that your school community does not have a common vision of where you want to go with reform. On one hand, these issues will make comprehensive school reform difficult for you. On the other hand, pursuing comprehensive reform is one way to build the sort of experience you are lacking, to develop the sort of vision you seek. And some comprehensive school designs provide explicit help to schools in the process of fostering collegiality and creating a shared vision.

Planning and implementing a CSR approach may provide the impetus for building collegiality among staff and support from the district and community.

Ultimately, your school community has to make a judgment about whether the issues surfaced by the assessment are obstacles that will block your path or opportunities for improvement that comprehensive reform can help you seize. If you decide to move ahead, you will come back to these issues as you choose and implement a comprehensive school design. You will want to make sure that the process you use to put comprehensive reform in place addresses the weak spots and

builds upon the strengths you identified. The "Profiling" step in this guide's process is designed to help you make those linkages.

Once you know what your school looks like, create a profile of where you want to go. Set a small number of priorities to focus on during the initial implementation period.

If you decide not to implement a full-blown comprehensive reform effort because of internal barriers to success, one approach recommended by experienced practitioners is to start small. If your staff lacks experience working together to accomplish tasks, select a small-scale project to tackle now and achieve a small win. If your school community has trouble coming to consensus about important policies or decisions, pick a pressing but manageable issue and work through it. You can build on small successes by taking on more and more significant activities and decisions. If your school is riddled with conflict and mistrust, prescriptions are more difficult to come by. The process of improvement is likely to involve an extended period of time as you bring in outside help, await or promote changes in staff, or conduct a more in-depth planning process. See Appendix G for some resources to help with this process.

3. *The school does not have the support it will need from the school district in order to implement comprehensive school reform.* While much of the hard work of comprehensive school reform takes place at the school level, school districts can play an essential role in ensuring its success by granting schools flexibility in budgeting, staffing, and scheduling, by marshalling resources needed to implement reform, and by providing schools with technical assistance and professional development opportunities. If you do not believe you will receive this kind of support, you will need to do some groundwork before initiating comprehensive reform—establishing relationships with district staff and advocating for a more supportive environment.

If external barriers are what cause you to hesitate before implementing comprehensive school reform, your options are more limited. You will want to work, perhaps in conjunction with other schools that share your interest in comprehensive reform, toward garnering more support from your school district for the activities you propose. Again, Appendix G contains some resources along these lines.

Step Three: Profiling Your Comprehensive Reform Approach

Now that you've determined your strengths and priorities for improvement, you are ready to create a "profile" of a comprehensive school reform approach. The purpose of building a profile is to develop a list of components or characteristics to look for as you investigate your options. There are many ways to build this list. In addition to the tool provided here, you might also consider using *Achieving Student Success: A Handbook of Widely Implemented Research-Based Educational Reform Models*. The Laboratory for Student Success has developed this online handbook that offers a systematic decision-making framework and research base on the components, requirements, and outcomes of 11 comprehensive school reform models. See Appendix G for information about how to obtain the handbook.

The Profiling Tool in Appendix C helps you identify characteristics of an approach that will

- Address your top-priority needs for improvement.
- Build on your existing strengths and assets.
- Help you overcome (or at least sidestep) your main challenges.
- Fit the beliefs and values of your school community.

Develop a concise statement of what you are looking for in a CSR approach, especially related to goals for teaching, learning, and assessment. This will help in selecting a model.

The last bullet point deserves special consideration. Up to now, the process outlined in this guide has focused on issues related to the other three bullets—your needs for improvement, your assets, and your challenges. These are the "hard realities" of your situation—the objective facts that describe where you are today. But two schools could very well find themselves in the same objective situation and yet choose different paths because the values and beliefs school stakeholders bring to the table are different. The hard realities, for example, may tell you that you need to revamp your instructional behaviors in order to raise student achievement, but they won't tell you which of several instructional approaches will provide the best fit for you. To answer that question, your school community will need to inquire more deeply into what kind of school it wants to create, and this Profiling Tool can provide some steps in that direction.

As an outcome of using the Profiling Tool, you will develop a concise statement of what you are looking for in a comprehensive reform approach. This concise statement will help you target and complete your research into various reform models, as discussed under Step Four.

Instructions

The Profiling Tool presents a list of indicators or characteristics of comprehensive school reform approaches, many of which may be addressed by adopting an external model. You are asked to determine the extent to which the right CSR approach for your school should focus on each or on any of these indicators (see examples on page 14). The indicators are directly linked to the nine criteria of the CSRD Program.

The Profiling Tool is not meant to be an exhaustive list of all possible indicators of comprehensive school reform approaches. Far from it. The instrument includes lots of space for you to add additional indicators that you deem important—on either end of the essential-to-unacceptable spectrum.

It may be tempting to check "Essential" for quite a few of the indicators you see (and some others). Most schools see lots of opportunity for improvement and are eager to tackle all of their challenges at once. But it is vital to use the "Essential" check marks sparingly. An approach that tackles too much can be overwhelming and lack focus. And when you move into Step Four to researching and deciding upon CSR models, having too many "Essential" check marks will make it difficult or impossible to identify a model that fits. Setting priorities and addressing the one to three priorities for improvement will help your school begin and sustain the effort.

Example 1:

If your school identified lack of a shared vision as one of the top priorities for improvement (or as one of the primary barriers to success), on line one you would want to check "Essential" or "Desirable." And because you do not have an existing vision, on line two you would check "Does Not Matter or Apply."

The approach...	Essential	Desirable	Does Not Matter or Apply	Undesirable	Unacceptable
Helps our school devise a new vision for school improvement	✔				
Helps our school refine an existing vision for school improvement			✔		

Example 2:

If your school has a compelling shared vision as one of its main strengths, you would not want to pursue an approach that asked you to rethink your vision from scratch. So, you would check "Unacceptable" on the first line. And you might check "Desirable" or even "Essential" on the next line if you thought some refinement was in order.

The approach...	Essential	Desirable	Does Not Matter or Apply	Undesirable	Unacceptable
Helps our school devise a new vision for school improvement					✔
Helps our school refine an existing vision for school improvement		✔			

Producing a Summary Profile

Once you have completed the Profiling Tool, finish the job by crafting a short summary of the nature of the comprehensive school reform approach suggested by your analysis. Try to write down in just a paragraph or two the vital elements that your approach must have. Emphasize the "Essentials" from the instrument as well as the "Unacceptables" in this summary.

For example, suppose in your self-evaluation you found that one of your school's greatest needs for improvement was in the area of helping students enhance higher-order thinking skills. Imagine that you concluded that your curriculum was not at the core of your problem—the curriculum contained plenty of material aimed at this aspect of learning. The difficulties arose in the instructional behaviors in which teachers were engaging—behaviors that did not do as much as you would like to develop higher-order capabilities. You found that your staff was fairly committed to change, and that they worked together well in a group decision-making setting. But you also found that teachers were very uncomfortable being observed by their peers in class and in receiving feedback from one another about instructional techniques.

In this situation, your summary might read something like this:

Our school's comprehensive school reform approach must increase our students' capacity to engage in higher-order thinking. To achieve this end, the approach must lead to changes in the instructional behavior of our teachers. We realize that observing one another and giving one another feedback will be essential to this change, but we do not feel equipped to engage in that work at present. So our comprehensive approach must help us gradually become comfortable with playing those roles.

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A real summary would likely have more to it than that. The story it tells would probably be more complicated. And the summary would probably include a heavier dose of the school's beliefs and values, talking not just about "changing instructional behaviors," but in what ways. But a real summary should share this example's clarity and focus because only a clear, focused profile can provide the basis for the next step in the process: researching and selecting the right comprehensive school reform model for your school's approach.

Step Four: Making a Decision

This guide now turns its attention to one step your school might take after completing a profile: selecting a comprehensive school reform model that can support your overall approach. As you consider how to move forward with your reform approach, you might want to look outside your walls for a preexisting school reform model that is already at work in other schools, especially those similar to your own. Adopting such a model is not for every school. And the model you select may not provide everything your comprehensive school reform approach calls for, but it can provide a centerpiece that helps focus your school reform activity.

Six Steps to Selecting a CSR Model

1. Conduct research
2. Consider all of the options
3. Make an initial decision
4. Inform stake-holders and ask them to review the initial decision
5. Modify the decision, if necessary
6. Approve the final decision

After all the work involved in self-analysis, profiling, and targeting, don't just toss a coin to decide on a model. The steps involved in matching your school to a design model may be the most critical of all.

While the Self-Evaluation and Profiling steps give you the understanding of what you need for your school and what you want in a model, it is this decision-making process that matches this information with actual models. The process we suggest has six steps: conduct research; consider all the options; make an initial decision; inform stakeholders and ask them to review the initial decision; modify the decision, if necessary; and approve the final decision.

While all six steps are necessary, researching the models will be the most time consuming and important. We will therefore provide you with some guidance and suggestions about how to go about managing this task.

Research and Consideration

We recommend extensive research on a few models—perhaps two or three—that seem the best match for your school. You have many models from which to choose. In our examples, we will talk primarily about the 26 models found in the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory's (NWREL) *Catalog of School Reform Models*. But keep in mind that you may have other approaches at your disposal. Local universities, for example, may have developed comprehensive models worth investigating. So think broadly at the outset, then use this process to narrow your options.

To determine your final two or three choices of models, we recommend the following process of elimination.

First Cut

In the first cut, look for simple ways to eliminate certain models. For example, your school district or state may have a list of school models from which it mandates schools to choose for purposes of the CSRD Program, or at least priorities that all school reform approaches should address. If so, and if you are planning to pursue the grant available under this program, you can narrow your choices immediately to those that meet these requirements.

It might be helpful to have an external assistance provider take an objective look at the match you propose. Can you defend your choice? Does it make the most sense for supporting and advancing your school's vision?

Another simple way to narrow your choices is to start with the grade-level requirements of your school. Since some models target only certain grade levels, you can quickly eliminate a number of them without detailed research. We have provided student population information in Appendix D, drawing on information from NWREL's *Catalog of School Reform Models*. Suppose your school serves high school students. The Student Population Chart shows that 18 of the 26 models serve Grades 9-12. These 18 models would make up your first cut.

Second Cut

Next consider the major elements of your Profiling Tool. Compare the areas you chose as priorities to the main features and goals of each of the first-cut models. You'll find that the *Catalog of School Reform Models* has a chart called "In Brief" clearly listing the primary goal and the main features for each of the 26 models. If you are not able to discern enough information from these charts, the catalog provides a four- to five-page synopsis of each model. For example, suppose in your profile, you place a high priority on finding a model that focuses on helping your school reorganize its governance and management structures. Not all of the models place that focus at their centers; some emphasize curriculum or instructional methods instead. Eliminating the models that do not match your central goals and priorities will help lower the number of eligible models to consider.

Third Cut

In this third cut, you'll want to narrow your choices down to your final two or three. The best way to do this is to match the characteristics you want in your approach (your profile) with the characteristics of the actual models. We have provided a grid to help track this information. (See Appendix E for a sample grid and Appendix F for a blank grid). Along the top of the grid, fill in the models remaining after your second cut. Along the left side, fill in the statements you marked "Essential" or "Unacceptable" in your Profiling Tool. Then examine your second-cut models to see whether they meet the needs implied by the statements in the Profiling Tool.

There are several resources that will be useful at this stage:

- The *Catalog of School Reform Models*
- Web sites of the models (you will find links to these on NCREL's Web site and other sites listed in Appendix G)

- Tools such as videotaped interviews of model developers (recorded at CSRD Program workshops for schools and districts contemplating comprehensive school reform and available from your regional education lab)

You will probably not be able to determine from these resources how a specific model treats all of your profile's components. At this stage, though, absolute thoroughness is not a priority. If a model matches most of your profile, finding out whether it also matches that 23rd component is not all that important. Or if a model contains few matching elements, there is no reason to seek out information about questionable components. After you have completed the grid, you should be able to determine which two or three models have the greatest number of characteristics you are looking for and/or the characteristics that are most important to you. We suggest narrowing the number to two or three because the next stage of research can be relatively time-consuming. Before going on to the next cut, you will want to contact the developers you are considering to determine their availability and capacity to provide services in your school.

Don't contract and begin intensive work with a reform model developer until you are both clear on what your responsibilities are for implementing the effort and for determining what success looks like in 6 months, in 1 year, in 3 years.

Final Cut

At this point, your research efforts should be much more thorough. We have compiled some suggested questions (see Appendix H), mostly organized along the lines of the nine CSRD Program criteria. Many of these questions, of course, relate to the general characteristics of the model in question. But it is vital for participants in the process to go beyond these general characteristics and ask very specific questions about how adoption of the model would affect them and others in similar roles. Therefore, you will also see numerous questions that different individuals might pose about what a given model means for them, especially under the "Effective Strategies" section.

Note that some of the research questions in the Appendix are only applicable if your Profiling Tool says they are. For instance, if you made the statement that the ideal comprehensive school reform approach does not alter your current governance or management, you may want to spend less time on the questions related to these topics.

For this final stage of research, in addition to the *Catalog of School Reform Models* and the other resources you used in the third cut, you should also use other resources. These resources might include interviews of the model developers and visits to other schools that have implemented the model. Schools in NCREL's region can find model sites listed on NCREL's Web site (see Appendix G).

We strongly recommend that you visit schools that are similar to your own and that are implementing the model(s) you are considering. We also recommend that you prepare for your visit by developing a list of specific questions for the school's administrators, teachers, students, and community members.

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Initial Decision

Your initial decision should be made after careful research and serious consideration of whether this match is right for your school. It is very important for you to determine not just whether this match works in theory, but also in practice. Go beyond the on-paper characteristics of the models and think about and get concrete answers to questions like these. How will the stakeholders in your school work with the model developers and those providing technical assistance and training? Who from the developer's group will be assigned to work with you and how often will they be on site? What kinds of staffing changes should you anticipate? How will the work of administrators, teachers, students, and parents change as a result of this partnership? What kinds of changes can you expect in student achievement and when? These types of questions are necessary to discover the human dimensions of the match between your school and a comprehensive school reform model.

Your stakeholders should understand your decision to select a CSR approach and what added value the external design brings.

Direct contact with the model developers is critical at this point. Negotiating the specifics details of your work together now will lower your chances of facing unpleasant "surprises" later. Being a critical consumer is essential. Do not be swayed by marketing techniques or unsubstantiated promises of quick success. Comprehensive reform requires a commitment of time, dollars, and human resources that should be driven by sound data and made only after the details are concretely negotiated.

The process you use to arrive at the initial decision is beyond the scope of this guide. Coming to a consensus or using a voting process within your planning group may be difficult, but it is of critical importance. This is one of the places where having a skilled facilitator involved is of the utmost value.

Stakeholder Review

While making a good match is an important goal, agreement about which decision you choose is also vital. The next step in this decision-making process is to ask stakeholders to review your initial decision. The stakeholders should include (at least) teachers, school support teams, parents, community members partnering with the school, and district or state officials. When determining how stakeholders will review your decision, strive to create a healthy balance between casting a wide net and creating an efficient process that allows for closure.

Some school models set forth a required process that you must follow in order to become eligible to implement the model. For example, it is common for models to require a certain percentage of the school's faculty to vote "yes" in a referendum about whether to adopt the model. If your chosen model prescribes procedures like these, you will obviously want to shape your stakeholder review process accordingly.

Reconsidering Your Decision and Final Approval

The final two steps in this decision-making process are modifying your initial decision, if necessary, after the stakeholder review and

giving the decision your final approval. At this stage, changes in your plans should still be driven by information you have gathered about the needs of your students and school. Be sure to go back to the developers with any changes to ensure that they can still meet your school's demands. Ideally, this entire process has stimulated a high level of commitment for comprehensive school reform in your school and has provided a strong foundation for the implementation of the approach you have devised.

Conclusion

Comprehensive school reform offers the promise of dramatic improvements in student learning for your entire school. Not surprisingly, the process of successfully engaging in comprehensive reform is complex. This guide has provided a broad outline of a process to help organize that complexity. But this guide, and other resources listed here, are only tools. The realization of comprehensive reform's promise will only come when teachers, administrators, parents, and others put tools like this to work where it counts. Your ingenuity in using these tools will be the key to effective comprehensive reform.

Appendix A

Self-Evaluation Tool

This NCREL-developed Self-Evaluation Tool is designed to help schools create a snapshot of where they are related to such critical factors as governance and management, curriculum and instruction, professional development, and community involvement.

Schools can approach the issue of who should complete this tool in different ways. One approach is to have your team discuss each question and arrive at a common judgment. Another is to have individuals fill out the tool and then tabulate and discuss the results. Either way, it is important to have a mechanism for differences of opinion to be expressed and considered.

For each question in Parts I and II, rate your school on a simple scale of one to four, with a rating of three indicating that you rate your performance "high" on a given question. (A rating of four indicates that you are not sure where you stand.) To the right of the ratings, the tool provides space for you to provide details and evidence to support your judgments. Part III does not include ratings; instead, it asks that you respond to more open-ended questions.

Because of the general nature of the questions, providing details and evidence to support your judgment is critical to your response. For example, one of the questions in Part I of the Self-Evaluation is: To what extent is the proportion [of students] meeting your school's standards consistent across subjects, grade levels, and student groups? Suppose you gave your school a "low" rating (1) on this question. The "Details and Evidence" section provides a place to be more specific. You might note, for example, that student performance is especially low in reading, while achievement in other subjects looks a lot better. Or that student groups are performing at similar levels, with the exception of those for whom English is not their first language. You might also make note of any evidence you have to support your conclusions—test score data, for instance, that show gaps between your reading scores and those in other subjects. Clearly, the space provided will not always be sufficient to include this kind of information, so use additional sheets or attach supporting material as needed. The attachments may be helpful as you complete your CSRD Program application.

The self-evaluation also has spaces where you can include more specific questions that your school thinks are important. For example, suppose your school recently embarked on an effort to introduce alternative forms of assessment, such as using portfolios of student work to gauge progress over time. You might add a series of questions to ask how well this specific initiative was shaping up, such as: To what extent are teachers in our school using portfolios to assess students' progress? To what extent does the use of portfolios vary by teacher, grade level, or subject? How well prepared are our teachers to guide students in their preparation of portfolios? How well are teachers using the information they gain through portfolios to adjust their instruction for individual children?

However you decide to approach using this tool, it is critical that you spend quality time responding to the questions and providing supporting evidence.

Appendix A

Self-Evaluation Tool

Part I: Our Students

	Judgment				Details and Evidence
Students' Learning and Accomplishments	Low		High	Don't know	
What proportion of your students meet your school's learning standards?	1	2	3	4	
To what extent is the proportion meeting your school's standards consistent across subjects, grade levels, and student groups?	1	2	3	4	
How successful are specific student populations (at-risk, disabled, or LEP) in their learning?	1	2	3	4	
What proportion of your students meet your school's standards for attendance and in-school behavior?	1	2	3	4	
To what extent are these proportions consistent across grade levels and student groups?	1	2	3	4	
To what extent are your students engaged in and excited about learning?	1	2	3	4	
To what extent is students' engagement in learning consistent across subjects, grade levels, and student groups?	1	2	3	4	
Other Questions					
	1	2	3	4	
	1	2	3	4	
	1	2	3	4	
	1	2	3	4	
	1	2	3	4	
	1	2	3	4	
	1	2	3	4	
	1	2	3	4	

Part II: The Current State Of Our School's Program

	Judgment				Details and Evidence
Comprehensive Program	Low		High	Don't know	
To what extent do teachers, administrators, and staff have a shared vision for the school?	1	2	3	4	
To what extent does school improvement encompass the whole school rather than focusing on particular grade levels, subjects, students, or teachers?	1	2	3	4	
To what extent is the quality of your school improvement efforts consistent across issues, goals and focus?	1	2	3	4	
How well aligned are your school improvement efforts with your vision?	1	2	3	4	
Support Within the School					
How supportive is school staff of a vision for the school?	1	2	3	4	
To what extent is this support consistent across school staff?	1	2	3	4	
How supportive is school staff of school improvement efforts?	1	2	3	4	
To what extent is this support consistent across school staff?	1	2	3	4	
To what extent do the principal and staff agree on implementation of school improvement efforts?	1	2	3	4	
To what extent is staff willing to assess strengths and weaknesses and make necessary changes?	1	2	3	4	
Note: Questions about staff support for particular aspects of the school's program appear in the appropriate section below.					
Measurable Goals and Benchmarks					
To what extent are there measurable goals for student performance?	1	2	3	4	
To what extent are there clear benchmarks for meeting these goals?	1	2	3	4	
To what extent are the school's goals for student performance aligned with the school's vision?	1	2	3	4	
To what extent are the school's goals for student performance aligned with state/local standards and assessments?	1	2	3	4	

Part II: The Current State Of Our School's Program *(continued)*

	Judgment				Details and Evidence
Other Questions	Low		High	Don't know	
	1	2	3	4	
	1	2	3	4	
	1	2	3	4	
	1	2	3	4	
	1	2	3	4	
	1	2	3	4	
	1	2	3	4	
	1	2	3	4	
	1	2	3	4	
	1	2	3	4	
	1	2	3	4	
	1	2	3	4	
	1	2	3	4	
	1	2	3	4	
	1	2	3	4	
	1	2	3	4	
	1	2	3	4	
	1	2	3	4	
	1	2	3	4	

Part II: The Current State Of Our School's Program *(continued)*

	Judgment				Details and Evidence
Methods and Strategies: Curriculum	Low		High	Don't know	
How effective is your school's curriculum?	1	2	3	4	
To what extent is the curriculum based on research?	1	2	3	4	
To what extent is the quality of your curriculum consistent across subjects, grade levels, and student groups?	1	2	3	4	
How well does the curriculum meet the needs of specific student populations (at-risk, disabled, or LEP)?	1	2	3	4	
To what extent is your school's curriculum aligned across grades and subjects (i.e., how well do the subjects complement and reinforce each other)?	1	2	3	4	
To what extent is your school's curriculum aligned with state/ local standards?	1	2	3	4	
How supportive are teachers of your school's curriculum?	1	2	3	4	
Methods and Strategies: Instruction					
How effective is instruction in your school?	1	2	3	4	
To what extent is instructional quality consistent across subjects, grade levels, teachers, and student groups?	1	2	3	4	
To what extent are instructional methods based on best-practices research?	1	2	3	4	
How well do instructional strategies meet the needs of specific student populations (at-risk, disabled, or LEP students)?	1	2	3	4	
To what extent is instruction aligned with curriculum in your school?	1	2	3	4	
To what extent is technology integrated into your school's instruction?	1	2	3	4	
How effective is technology as an instructional tool in engaging students in learning?	1	2	3	4	
To what extent is the use of technology consistent across subject, grade level, and student group?	1	2	3	4	

Part II: The Current State Of Our School's Program *(continued)*

	Judgment				Details and Evidence
Methods and Strategies: Assessment	Low		High	Don't know	
How well does your school assess student learning?	1	2	3	4	
To what extent is assessment quality consistent across subjects, grade levels, and student groups?	1	2	3	4	
To what extent does your school use student assessment to help teachers change their practice?	1	2	3	4	
To what extent is student assessment aligned with curriculum and instruction in your school?	1	2	3	4	
How supportive is school staff of student assessment processes?	1	2	3	4	
To what extent is support for your school's student assessment process consistent across school staff?	1	2	3	4	
Methods and Strategies: Governance					
How well does your school community make decisions about policy and direction?	1	2	3	4	
To what extent is the quality of school governance consistent across issues?	1	2	3	4	
How supportive is school staff of governance processes and decisions?	1	2	3	4	
To what extent is support for governance processes and decisions consistent across school staff?	1	2	3	4	
How engaged is school staff in school governance?	1	2	3	4	
To what extent is engagement consistent across school staff?	1	2	3	4	
How willing is your school community to change the governance structure in order to improve the school?	1	2	3	4	

Part II: The Current State Of Our School's Program *(continued)*

	Judgment				Details and Evidence
Methods and Strategies: Management	Low		High	Don't know	
How well do your school administrators manage the day-to-day affairs of the school?	1	2	3	4	
How well does the management system support your school's teaching and learning?	1	2	3	4	
To what extent is the quality of school management consistent across issues, goals, and focus?	1	2	3	4	
How supportive is school staff of management processes and decisions?	1	2	3	4	
To what extent is support for management processes and decisions consistent across school staff?	1	2	3	4	
How engaged is school staff in school management?	1	2	3	4	
To what extent is engagement consistent across school staff?	1	2	3	4	
How willing is your school community to change the management system in order to improve the school?	1	2	3	4	
Professional Development					
How effective is your school's professional development program?	1	2	3	4	
To what extent is the quality of professional development consistent across issues, goals, and focus?	1	2	3	4	
To what extent does the school base its professional development plan on its academic strengths and weaknesses?	1	2	3	4	
How well does the school's professional development effort address the training needs of the principal and other administrators?	1	2	3	4	
How well integrated are your professional development efforts with each other?	1	2	3	4	
How engaged is school staff in professional development?	1	2	3	4	
To what extent is engagement consistent across school staff?	1	2	3	4	

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Part II: The Current State Of Our School's Program *(continued)*

	Judgment				Details and Evidence
External Technical Support and Services	Low		High	Don't know	
To what extent does your school's program use external support and assistance from a comprehensive school reform entity?	1	2	3	4	
Parent/Community Involvement ***Parent Involvement***					
How involved are parents in your school community?	1	2	3	4	
To what extent does the school staff provide parents with easily understood information about standards and expectations for student achievement?	1	2	3	4	
How well do parents provide at-home learning opportunities?	1	2	3	4	
How well integrated are your parent involvement and school improvement efforts?	1	2	3	4	
How supportive are parents of your school's education program?	1	2	3	4	
To what extent is support for your school's program consistent across parents?	1	2	3	4	
To what extent are parents involved in decision making at the school?	1	2	3	4	
To what extent is engagement consistent across parents?	1	2	3	4	

Part II: The Current State Of Our School's Program *(continued)*

	Judgment				Details and Evidence
Parent/Community Involvement ***Community Involvement***	Low		High	Don't know	
How effective is your school's community involvement effort?	1	2	3	4	
To what extent does the school staff provide community partners with easily understood information about standards and expectations for student achievement?	1	2	3	4	
How well integrated are your community involvement and school improvement efforts?	1	2	3	4	
To what extent are community partners engaged in providing outside learning opportunities for students?	1	2	3	4	
To what extent are community partners involved in decision making at the school?	1	2	3	4	
To what extent is engagement consistent across community members?	1	2	3	4	
Coordination of Resources					
To what extent are other resources (federal, state, local, and private) coordinated to maximize the school's reform effort?	1	2	3	4	
Other Questions					
	1	2	3	4	
	1	2	3	4	
	1	2	3	4	
	1	2	3	4	
	1	2	3	4	
	1	2	3	4	
	1	2	3	4	
	1	2	3	4	

Part II: The Current State Of Our School's Program *(continued)*

	Judgment				Details and Evidence
Evaluation Strategies	Low		High	Don't know	
How well does your school evaluate its own performance?	1	2	3	4	
To what extent does the school community adjust its practices based on evaluation results?	1	2	3	4	
To what extent is the quality of your school evaluation consistent across issues, goals, and focus?	1	2	3	4	
To what extent does the school align its evaluation effort to state/local standards?	1	2	3	4	
How supportive is school staff of your school's evaluation efforts?	1	2	3	4	
To what extent is this support consistent across school staff?	1	2	3	4	
How engaged is school staff in school evaluation processes?	1	2	3	4	
Other Questions					
	1	2	3	4	
	1	2	3	4	
	1	2	3	4	
	1	2	3	4	
	1	2	3	4	
	1	2	3	4	
	1	2	3	4	
	1	2	3	4	
	1	2	3	4	
	1	2	3	4	

Part III: Our Environment

Other Reform Efforts	Details and Evidence
How might comprehensive school reform fit (or clash) with other reform efforts under way in our district or state?	
Policy/Regulatory Issues	
How much flexibility do we have regarding our professional development activities?	
How much flexibility do we have regarding our school schedule (day and year)?	
How much flexibility do we have regarding our staffing decisions?	
How much flexibility do we have regarding the allocation of our school s funds?	
Is it possible for us to obtain special "waivers" from district policies to try new approaches?	
Can school districts petition the state for similar waivers of state restrictions?	
How likely are these exemptions to come through?	
Financial Resources	
What kinds of financial resources and support are available to us from the district (or other entities) to pursue reform?	
Are there financial resources we could reallocate from other uses to support reform?	
What are the constraints on our financial resources?	
Human Resources	
What kinds of human resources and support are available to us from the district (or other entities) to pursue reform?	
What are the constraints on our human resources?	

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Part III: Our Environment *(continued)*

Other Questions	Details and Evidence

Appendix B

Part IV: *Summary of Self-Evaluation*

This part of the Self-Evaluation provides you with the opportunity to pull together what you have learned by completing the Self-Evaluation Tool. The goal is to help you identify the assets your school brings with it as well as the challenges you face. Both assets and challenges can be internal (characteristics of your school) or external (characteristics of the environment in which your school works).

The Summary poses four questions. To answer these questions, draw on all parts of the Self-Evaluation you just completed. For example, in answer to the first question, you might begin by drawing on some of the student achievement information from Part I, noting that your students do particularly well in math, or that your older students are especially strong. Using the information from Part II, you might comment that your school's curriculum is quite well put-together, that teachers are heavily engaged in decision making at schools, and that many parents are highly involved in the school's workings. From Part III, you might point to external support like the array of technical assistance available from central office staff on instructional strategies.

In answer to the second and third questions, you might draw on information in Part I indicating that in reading, your students lag behind their performance in other subjects and that limited English proficient students are not doing as well as others. From Part II, you might express frustration that instructional behaviors have not changed in response to changes in curriculum or that they have only changed across a subset of classrooms.

On the fourth question, you might note (from Part II) that your faculty has little experience observing one another and offering feedback, activities that might be critical to implementing comprehensive reform. Drawing on Part II, you might conclude that in the past, certain state regulations had prevented you from putting into place some of the scheduling and staffing changes that appeared helpful.

It is important at this stage to begin paring what could be a set of very long lists into something manageable. Begin prioritizing here, identifying your most important strengths and challenges.

Part IV: Summary

Guiding Question
What are our school's major strengths?

Part IV: Summary *(continued)*

Guiding Question
What areas of our school need improvement?

Part IV: Summary *(continued)*

Guiding Question
Of these areas for improvement, which have the highest priorities?

Part IV: Summary *(continued)*

Guiding Question
What barriers (both internal and external) do we expect to face as we move forward on comprehensive reform?

Part IV: Summary *(continued)*

Guiding Question
What aspects of our school's environment might provide support for our pursuit of comprehensive reform?
What areas of our environment might hinder our ability to pursue comprehensive school reform?

Appendix C

The Profiling Tool presents you with a list of indicators or characteristics of comprehensive school reform approaches, many of which may be addressed by adopting an external model. You are asked to determine the extent to which the right CSR approach for your school should focus on each or any of these indicators. The indicators are directly linked to the nine criteria of the CSRD Program.

For each indicator, you are asked to check one of five boxes. At one extreme, you might find an indicator "Essential" to your school—the CSR approach that your school adopts must address this indicator. At the other extreme, you might label an indicator "Unacceptable"—a CSR approach that you select will not have to have a strong focus here. In between, you might indicate that a particular indicator is "Desirable" (but not essential), "Undesirable" (though not unacceptable), or that an indicator "Does Not Matter or Apply."

The Profiling Tool is not meant to be an exhaustive list of all possible indicators of comprehensive school reform approaches. The tool includes lots of space for you to add additional indicators that you deem important—on either end of the essential-to-unacceptable spectrum.

It may be tempting to check "Essential" for quite a few of the indicators you see (and some others). Most schools see lots of opportunity for improvement and are eager to tackle all of their challenges at once. But it is vital to use the "Essential" check marks very sparingly. Setting priorities and addressing the one to three priorities for improvement will help your school begin and sustain the effort.

Example 1:

If your school identified lack of a shared vision as one of the top priorities for improvement (or as one of the primary barriers to success), on line one you would want to check "Essential" or "Desirable." And because you do not have an existing vision, on line two you would check "Does Not Matter or Apply."

The approach	Essential	Desirable	Does Not Matter or Apply	Undesirable	Unacceptable
Helps our school devise a new vision for school improvement	✔				
Helps our school refine an existing vision for school improvement			✔		

Example 2:

If your school has a compelling shared vision as one of its main strengths, you would not want to pursue an approach that asked you to rethink your vision from scratch. So, you would check "Unacceptable" on the first line. And you might check "Desirable" or even "Essential" on the next line if you thought some refinement was in order.

The approach	Essential	Desirable	Does Not Matter or Apply	Undesirable	Unacceptable
Helps our school devise a new vision for school improvement					✔
Helps our school refine an existing vision for school improvement		✔			

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1. *Comprehensive Approach*

The approach...	Essential	Desirable	Does Not Matter or Apply	Undesirable	Unacceptable
Helps our school devise a new vision for school improvement.					
Helps our school refine our existing vision for school improvement.					
Includes a preexisting vision of effective schooling that we can adopt.					

2. *Support Within the School*

The approach...	Essential	Desirable	Does Not Matter or Apply	Undesirable	Unacceptable
Helps build support within our school for an existing program of improvement.					
Includes a participatory process in which staff helps craft the reform plan.					

3. *Goals and Benchmarks*

The approach...	Essential	Desirable	Does Not Matter or Apply	Undesirable	Unacceptable
Includes a comprehensive set of goals and benchmarks to which our students can aspire.					
Includes a process through which our school sets its own goals and benchmarks to achieve.					

4. *Effective, Research-Based Strategies — Curriculum*

The approach...	Essential	Desirable	Does Not Matter or Apply	Undesirable	Unacceptable
Provides curriculum in the area of • Reading					
• Writing					
• Mathematics					
• Language Arts/Literature					
• Science					
• Social studies					
• Fine arts					
Provides assistance in the process of developing our own curriculum					
Allows our school to use the curriculum we now have					
Includes a curriculum that • Emphasizes practical application of knowledge to authentic problems					
• Emphasizes integration across subjects					
• Emphasizes vocational studies and work-based learning opportunities					
• Includes critical thinking skills					
• Is tailored to students' background/has multi-cultural content					
•					
•					
•					
•					
•					

4. *Effective, Research-Based Strategies* — Instruction

The approach...	Essential	Desirable	Does Not Matter or Apply	Undesirable	Unacceptable
Focuses on improving our school's instructional practices					
In its instructional methods, emphasizes:					
• Technology-based instruction					
• Highly scripted lessons					
• Hands-on learning					
• Practical, authentic activities					
• One-on-one tutoring					
• Individualized instruction					
• Work tailored to each child's level					
• Student-driven instruction					
• Allowing students their choice of learning activity					
• Team teaching					
• Heterogeneous grouping					
• Homogeneous grouping					
• Personal learning plans					
• A longer school day/year					
• Restructured day/year					
• Constructivist strategies					
• Metacognitive strategies					
• The teacher as facilitator					
• Cooperative learning					
• Peer tutoring					
• Multiple intelligences					
• Flexible scheduling					
• Small class size					
• The use of technology					
• Learning outside the classroom					
•					
•					
•					
•					

4. *Effective, Research-Based Strategies — Assessment*

The approach...	Essential	Desirable	Does Not Matter or Apply	Undesirable	Unacceptable
Includes new ways of assessing our students' progress					
Aligns with existing assessments that we are required/have chosen to administer					
Includes assessment strategies that...					
• Judge student progress frequently					
• Emphasize "performance assessment"					
• Use student portfolios					
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4. *Effective, Research-Based Strategies — Governance and Management*

The approach...	Essential	Desirable	Does Not Matter or Apply	Undesirable	Unacceptable
Uses a common process for reorganizing and/or improving our school.					
Does not alter (or fits with) our existing governance structures and processes.					
Does not require us to make major changes in the number of staff we have.					
Does not require us to make major changes in the type of staff we have.					
In its methods of governance, emphasizes: • A participatory approach to decision making					
• A collaborative or team approach to school improvement					
• Consensus building among staff					
• The principal as facilitator and support provider					
•					
•					
•					
•					
•					
•					
•					

5.–6. *Professional Development and External Assistance*

The approach...	Essential	Desirable	Does Not Matter or Apply	Undesirable	Unacceptable
Includes intensive professional development in • New methods of teaching					
• Areas of curricular content					
• Governance/leadership					
• Peer-coaching/ observation					
• Working as a team					
• Building support for change among others					
• Parent/community relations					
• Evaluation/research					
•					
•					
•					
•					
Includes follow-up on-site technical assistance from an outside organization					
Includes conferences for teachers to attend					
Includes an electronic network for others engaged in a similar approach					
Includes visits to other schools engaged in a similar approach					

7. *Parent and Community Involvement*

The approach...	Essential	Desirable	Does Not Matter or Apply	Undesirable	Unacceptable
Emphasizes a role for parents in decision making about central school issues.					
Emphasizes a role for community members in decision making about central school issues.					
Equips parents to play a more active role in in-home learning.					
Helps the school involve parents and community members as volunteers.					
Includes the provision of family support services.					
Includes the provision of health and social services at the school site.					
Involves close partnerships with museums, libraries, or _____ (specify)					

8. *Coordination of Resources*

The approach...	Essential	Desirable	Does Not Matter or Apply	Undesirable	Unacceptable
Helps the school tap into new sources of funding and other resources.					
Does not require the school to obtain new sources of funding.					
Does not require the school to reallocate existing resources.					
Helps the school devise ways to reallocate existing resources.					

9. *Evaluation*

The approach...	Essential	Desirable	Does Not Matter or Apply	Undesirable	Unacceptable
Equips our staff to track the school's progress towards its goals.					
Provides outside evaluation of our school's progress toward its goals.					

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Appendix D

Student Population Chart

The Student Population Chart provides population information that can help you make your first cut and eliminate certain models. The information comes from NWREL's *Catalog of School Reform Models*. Since some models target only certain grade levels, you can quickly eliminate a number of them without detailed research. For example, suppose your school serves high school students. The chart shows that 18 of the 26 models serve Grades 9-12. The resulting 18 models would make up your first cut.

Appendix D

Student Population Chart

Name of design	Pre-K	Elem (K-5)	Middle (6-8)	High (9-12)	Target Population
Accelerated Schools		✔	✔		At-risk students
America's Choice School Design		✔	✔	✔	
ATLAS Communities	✔	✔	✔	✔	
Audrey Cohen College/ Purpose-Centered Education		✔	✔	✔	
Coalition of Essential Schools		✔	✔	✔	
Community for Learning		✔	✔	✔	At risk and special needs
Community Learning Centers	✔	✔	✔	✔	
Co-NECT Schools		✔	✔	✔	Primarily urban schools
Core Knowledge		✔	✔		
Different Ways of Knowing (Galef Institute)		✔	✔ (K-7)		Primarily disadvantaged and linguistically diverse
Direct Instruction		✔ (K-6)			Poor performing schools/ high poverty areas
Edison Project		✔	✔	✔	
Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound		✔	✔	✔	
Foxfire Fund		✔	✔	✔	
High Schools That Work				✔	Career-bound students
High/Scope Primary Grades Approach to Education		✔ (K-3)			
League of Professional Schools		✔	✔	✔	
Modern Red Schoolhouse		✔	✔	✔	
Montessori	✔	✔	✔		
Onward to Excellence		✔	✔	✔	
Paideia		✔	✔	✔	
Roots & Wings	✔	✔ (K-6)			Disadvantaged students
School Development Program		✔	✔	✔	
Success for All	✔	✔ (K-6)			Disadvantaged students
Talent Development High School with Career Academics				✔	At-risk, large schools, usually urban
Urban Learning Centers	✔	✔	✔	✔	Urban schools

Appendices E and F

These Research Grids will help you make your final cut of models. Along the top of the blank grid, Appendix F, fill in the models remaining after your second cut. Along the left side, fill in the statements you marked "Essential" or "Unacceptable" in your Profiling Tool. (The sample grid in Appendix E shows you how your finished grid will look.) Then examine your second-cut models to see whether they meet the needs implied by the statements in the Profiling Tool.

There are several resources that will be useful at this stage:

- *Catalog of School Reform Models*
- Web sites of the models (you will find links to these on NCREL's Web site and other sites listed in Appendix G)
- Tools such as videotaped interviews of model developers (recorded at CSRD Program workshops for schools and districts contemplating comprehensive school reform and available from your regional education laboratory)

After you have completed the grid, you should be able to determine which two or three models have the greatest number of characteristics you are looking for and/or the characteristics that are most important to you.

Appendix E

Research Grid Example

	America's Choice	ATLAS Communities	Audrey Cohen College	Coalition of Essential Schools	Community for Learning	Community Learning Centers	Edison Project	Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound	Fordire	High Schools That Work	League of Professional Schools	Modern Red Schoolhouse	Onward to Excellence	Paideia	School Development Program	Talent Development High School	Urban Learning Centers
The ideal comprehensive school design serves elementary school grades and																	
• Has a standards-based curriculum																	
• Emphasizes technology-based instruction																	
• Emphasizes individualized instruction																	
• Tailors work to each child's level																	
• Provides intense initial professional development																	
• Provides intense follow-up professional development																	
• Provides teacher training in content-specific areas																	
• Provides teacher training in instruction methodology																	
• Provides conferences for teachers to attend																	
• Provides an electronic network including e-mail, list servs, and Web site support																	
• Provides on-site facilitator(s) or other support staff																	
• Integrates technology into the curriculum																	
• Does not alter our current governance and management structure																	
• Provides technical and coaching assistance throughout the visioning process																	
• Considers parental involvement a crucial aspect of its model																	
• Encourages but does not require community involvement																	

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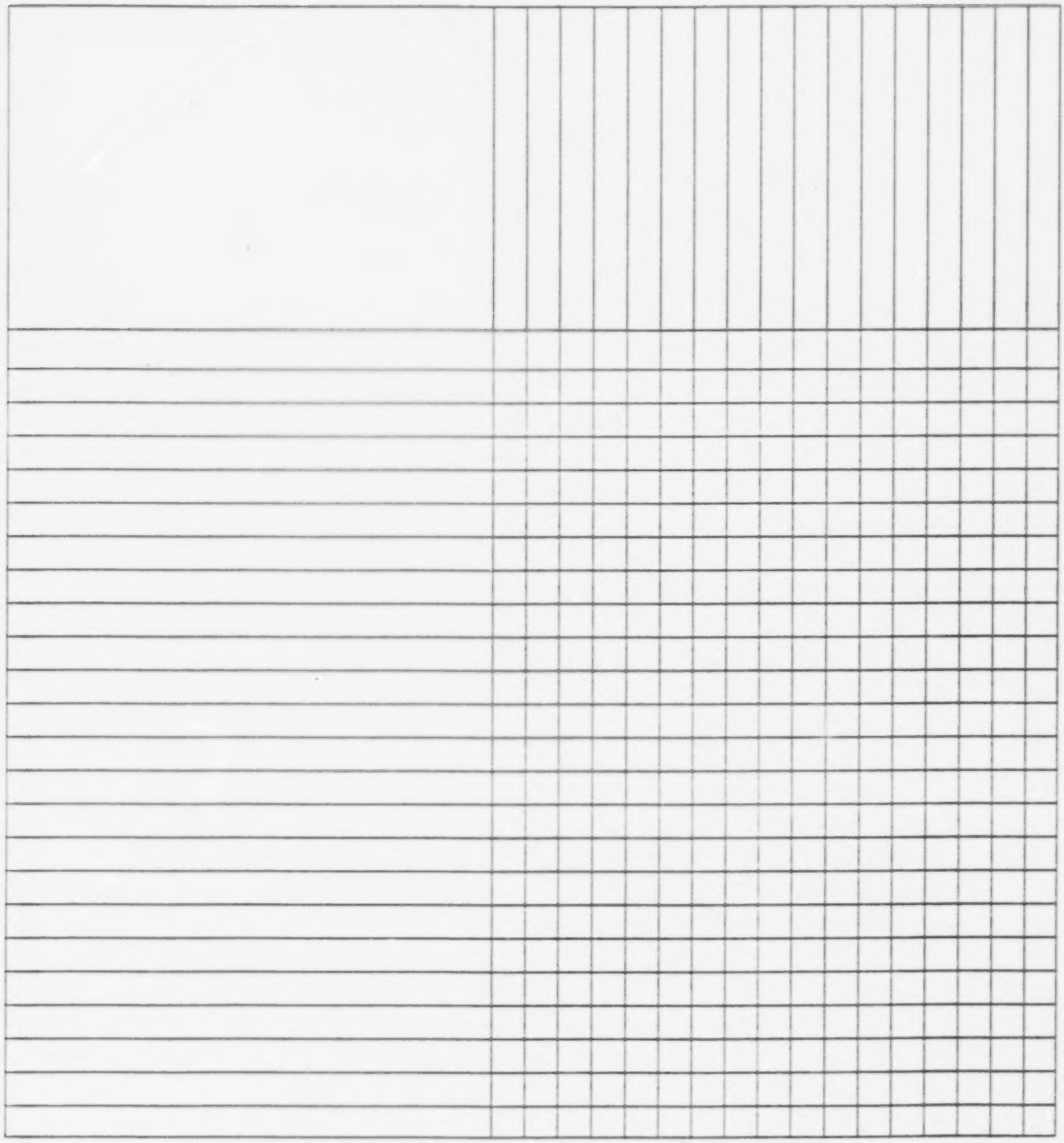
Appendix F

Research Grid



Appendix G

This list of resources will help you research information about potential models. Schools in NCREL's region can find model sites listed on NCREL's Web site.

The U.S. Department of Education
http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/compreform/

The U.S. Department of Education has a Web site for the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Program (CSRDP). This site provides detailed information regarding this program, including CSRDP guidance, the state application package, a CSRDP state-by-state funding allocation table, and links to publications and tools.

North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL) *http://www.ncrel.org/csri/*

NCREL's Comprehensive School Reform Web site provides CSRDP guidance and information, resources, and CSRDP tools. Included as a tool is information on CSRDP design model videotapes. This collection of tapes was recorded at CSRDP design model workshops for schools and districts contemplating comprehensive school reform. They include both a series of in-depth individual model tapes and two overview interview tapes that give short summaries of the models named in the legislation.

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL) *http://www.nwrel.org/csrdp/index.html*

NWREL's Web site offers descriptions of school designs, contact information for service providers, a list of Northwest sites, descriptions of the types of assistance available, and Internet links to articles about reform models. Included on this site is the *Catalog of School Reform Models*, which provides information on 26 whole-school reform models and 18 skill- and content-based models, including those models referenced in the legislation. The catalog was developed by NWREL with assistance from the Education Commission of the States. The site also provides a School CSR Self-Assessment Tool and other online resources such as *Ed Week* articles about comprehensive school reform.

Laboratory for Student Success (LSS)
http://www.temple.edu/LSS/csr.htm

LSS provides information, technical professional development, and an implementation assistance program. Some online resources that LSS provides are:

- *Achieving Student Success: A Handbook of Widely Implemented Research-Based Education Reform Models*
- An overview of comprehensive school reform provisions and the role of LSS
- Publications of 12 widely implemented research-based innovative programs
- Upcoming LSS-cosponsored conferences and workshops on comprehensive school reform

Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL) *http://www.sedl.org/csrd*
SEDL's Web site offers information about CSRDP and links to 27 school reform models and to other resources such as publications, research on school reform, tools, CSRDP Web sites and organizations involved with comprehensive school reform.

School-Based Reform: Lessons from the National Study—a Guide for School Reform Teams *www.ed.gov/pubs/Reform/index.html*
This is a resource for teachers and school administrators interested in undertaking school-based reforms. It provides examples of promising reform strategies and lessons learned from a national study of school-based reform.

Implementing Schoolwide Programs, Volume I: An Idea Book on Planning, Policy Studies Associates, 1998. Available from PSA, (202) 939-9780.
This document sets forth a comprehensive planning process for schoolwide change, based on the experience of schools across the country that have successfully engaged in comprehensive school reform. It provides more detailed guidance on several aspects of the planning process, such as needs assessment.

Appendix H

We have compiled some suggested questions, mostly organized along the lines of the nine CSRD Program criteria. Many of these questions relate to the general characteristics of the model in question. But it is vital for participants in the process to go beyond these general characteristics and ask very specific questions about how adoption of the model would affect them and others in similar roles. Therefore, you will also see numerous questions that different individuals might pose about what a given model means for them, especially under the "Effective Strategies" section.

Note that some of the research questions in the Appendix are only applicable if your Profiling Tool says they are. For instance, if you made the statement that the ideal comprehensive school reform approach does not alter your current governance or management, you may want to spend less time on the questions related to these topics.

1. *Comprehensive Approach (including general questions about the model)*

Nature and Track Record of the Model

a. What is the model's underlying philosophy?

b. Does this model emphasize the areas (e.g., curriculum, governance) that we identified as priorities?

c. Where is this model flexible and where is it fixed?

d. What is the evidence of the model's success in other schools?

e. Has this model been used in schools with demographics like ours?

f. What advantages does this model have over very similar ones?

School Visioning Processes

a. Does the model include a process to help our school develop (or refine) a shared vision?

b. If so, what is that process?

c. How much time does it require?

d. Who is involved, and over what time frames?

e. Does the design organization provide facilitators for the process? Or training for people at our school to facilitate the process?

f. How much flexibility does the school have in setting its own course versus adopting and adapting the model's ideas about what schools should be like?

2. *Support Within the School*

a. What kind of staff and/or parent buy-in is required to adopt this design?

b. Does the design organization provide assistance to school leaders in building support for the model within the school community?

3. *Goals and Benchmarks*

a. What standards for education success are required by the model?

b. To what extent are standards aligned with state/local requirements?

c. Is progress toward the standards measurable?

4. ***Effective Strategies***

Curriculum and Assessment

a. How well do the model's curriculum and assessment match the statements we made about our ideal approach?

b. Does this model focus on subjects/content areas where it is most important that we improve?

c. Does this model provide a specific curriculum (texts or materials)? If so, what is the curriculum?

d. Are there specific content lesson plans?

e. Does this model provide a framework for a suggested curriculum (rather than specific content)? If so, what is that framework? What would we be required to do to develop a specific curriculum using the framework?

f. What assessment methods and tools does the model suggest?

g. How would the use of these methods affect classroom teachers (in terms of time spent, training they would need, etc.)?

h. Are the assessment methods aligned with state/local requirements?

i. Does the model's staff assist with data collection, analysis, and/or reporting?

Instruction

a. How well does the model's instruction match the statements we made about our ideal approach?

b. Is there a specific instruction methodology suggested by the model? If so, what is it?

c. Are new books, technology, and other materials required in order to implement this model? If so, what are they?

d. If new books, technology and other materials are not required, are they suggested?

e. Are the required/suggested materials provided under the cost of the program?

f. How will the materials and technology we already have work with this model?

g. Are there suggested instructional methods for special needs students? If so, what are they?

h. Are there suggested instructional methods for limited-English proficient students? If so, what are they?

i. What will the typical teacher do differently if we adopt this model?

j. What would we expect to see happening in a typical classroom by year end?

Governance and Management

a. Will we need to change the governance of our school (i.e., who makes decisions and how they are made)? If so, how?

b. Will we need to change the management system of our school (i.e., how the school is administered day-to-day)? If so, how?

c. What additional staff (or roles) will be required with this model (e.g., facilitator, parent outreach coordinator)?

d. Does the design organization provide assistance with staff selection?

e. Does the design organization provide assistance in defining roles, setting performance expectations, and evaluating teachers and principals?

f. Does the design organization provide assistance managing conflict within the school?

5. *Professional Development*

a. How well does the model's professional development program match the statements we made about our ideal approach?

b. What teacher training (both initial and ongoing) does the model provide? In content? In instruction methodology? In parent relations, governance, administration, peer review and other relevant management issues?

c. How much additional staff development time will be required for the whole staff? For a smaller group of teachers?

d. Is there training for school leadership? In what areas?

e. What networking opportunities does the model provide for teachers and school leadership?

f. Are opportunities available for networking with other schools using the model?

6. *External Assistance*

a. Does the design organization help with the introduction and implementation process in each school? How?

b. How long does it typically take a school using this model to fully implement all aspects of the model?

c. What types of implementation interventions does the model stress? On-site visits? On-site facilitators? Whole-school training? Facilitator training?

d. How much flexibility is there regarding what services we receive? To what extent can you tailor a package to our needs?

e. If conflict arises between the school and the design organization, how is it handled?

f. Does the group provide assistance with state and local reporting requirements?

g. What individuals from the design group would work directly with the school? How would those people be chosen? What are their qualifications?

h. How well is the design group doing financially? Will the group be able to support us in the long run?

7. *Parent and Community Involvement*

a. How well do the model's parent and community involvement match the statements we made about our ideal approach?

b. What is the role and level of involvement of parents in the school under this model? How would a typical parent's engagement in the school change as a result of adoption of the model?

c. What is the role and level of involvement of community members and businesses in the school?

d. Does the model provide assistance with parent and community relations?

e. Does the model provide assistance addressing conflict with parents/community members?

8. *Coordination of Resources*

a. What are the required costs, including materials and services (both start-up and ongoing)?

b. What are the other costs we must incur to implement the model

- Nontraditional staff positions?
- Release time for teachers?
- Technology?

c. Will the funds we now have cover the costs of this model?

d. Will the design organization invest in our school? If so, how?

9. *Evaluation*

a. What level of guidance does this model provide in evaluating the school after implementation?

b. Does the design organization conduct evaluations of school performance? If so, what form do these take? What impact do they have on the conduct of the school on a daily basis (i.e., what is required of staff and students)? If none, can the design organization recommend evaluation procedures that make sense in the context of the model? Can it provide assistance to school staff on the use of these procedures?

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